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ABSTRACT

This report, based on visits to Vietnamese libraries and archives between 1987 and 1997, examines the largely unexplored corpus of Vietnamese textual resources in research institutions and libraries there and elsewhere, the associated problems of bibliographic control, and issues of preservation. The following topics are addressed: the history of collections, including decentralized control in the colonial period, dislocation, and contestation and destruction of records; bibliographic control and the Vietnam Union Catalog Project; and preservation, including the physical condition of repositories in Vietnam, conservation imperatives, preservation microfilming activities, and international cooperation. Conclusions and recommendations focus on training, national preservation planning, reformatting, conservation, book production techniques, and legal requirements. A list of Vietnamese institutions and glossary are appended. (AEF)

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Preservation and Archives in Vietnam

by Judith Henchy

February 1998

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Preservation and Archives in Vietnam

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February 1998

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She has been involved with library exchange projects in Vietnam since 1987, and she received a grant from the Social Science Research Council in 1989 to investigate the status of libraries and librarianship in Vietnam. She has worked with the program funded by Harvard-Yenching to train Vietnamese librarians at Simmons College and taught a class as part of that program.

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The Commission on Preservation and Access, a program of the Council on Library and Information Resources, supports the efforts of libraries and archives to save endangered portions of their paper-based collections and to meet the new preservation challenges of the digital environment. Working with institutions around the world, the Commission disseminates knowledge of best preservation practices and promotes a coordinated approach to preservation activity.

This report is one of a series issued by the Commission on Preservation and Access to describe the state of preservation activities and needs in various countries throughout the world.

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Contents

Modernity versus Historical Memory **1**

History of Collections **2**
- Decentralized Control in the Colonial Period **3**
  - Imperial Records **4**
  - École Française d'Extrême Orient **4**
- Dislocation **5**
- Contestation and Destruction of Records **5**
  - Records of War **6**
  - The *Chau Ban* **7**

Bibliographic Control **8**
- The Vietnam Union Catalog Project **10**

Preservation **11**
- The Physical Condition of Repositories in Vietnam **11**
- Conservation Imperatives **12**
- Preservation Microfilming Activities **14**
  - The SEAM Project **15**
- International Cooperation **16**

Conclusions and Recommendations **18**
- Training **18**
- National Preservation Planning **19**
- Reformatting **19**
- Conservation **20**
- Book Production Techniques **20**
- Legal Requirements **21**

Appendix: Vietnamese Institutions and Glossary

MODERNITY VERSUS HISTORICAL MEMORY

A 1994 cover photo of the *Vietnam Economic Times* depicts an elegantly dressed business woman, cellular telephone in hand, riding in a dilapidated pedicab pedaled by an emaciated young man in drab rags and cloth helmet. The government almost immediately banned the journal and criticized the photograph as belittling to the revolutionary values of the Vietnamese people. Yet the photo symbolizes the contrasts that have emerged over the past five years of rapid economic development in Vietnam. It is an image of transition that other photojournalists have subsequently sought to capture.

The changes and contrasts are no less apparent in the world of libraries and archives. A cartoon published in the official journal of the Vietnamese National Archives in 1992 depicts an Archives director's office equipped with fax machines and computers, while the archival storage building next door is overrun by rats carrying off the books and records. This was a poignant image at a time when neighborhood chickens shared the reading room of the National Archives II facility in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) and only the computer room was kept in air-conditioned isolation.

Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Five years later, the National Library is moving ahead with an automated catalog and regional LAN systems linking provincial libraries, while basic levels of training, the physical conditions of collections, and the prestige of the library profession remain little changed. The National Archives, which in the last three years has moved some collections to new facilities, is experimenting with digital capture and CD-ROM technologies for preserving and providing networked access to its more important collections. At the same time, massive volumes of national- and provincial-level documents remain in substandard conditions as the archival profession tries to draw attention to issues of document retention schedules and preservation priorities.

Vietnamese libraries and archives are poised between the pressures of modernity and the weight of tradition and political inertia, caught, as they always have been, between conflicting systems of knowledge. Systems adapted from Chinese Neo-Confucianism and the requirements of indigenous forms of ancestor worship emphasize the primacy of the past in determining the propriety and prosperity of the present. Paradoxically, while the importance placed on historical artifacts ensures their preservation

by one political system, it has made them increasingly vulnerable to destruction by a rival system. Vietnam's subordinate relationship to China for almost a millennium, and its later status as a French colonial territory, led to repeated periods of warfare and political instability. These factors, together with harsh climatic conditions, are responsible for the destruction of much of the nation's early historical and literary legacy.

Now the popularity of the *Vietnam Economic Times* and the proliferation of other English-language publications show a resurgence of international interest in Vietnam. With this interest comes an urgency to reexamine factors affecting the long-term preservation of materials that will serve scholars, the business world, and members of the overseas Vietnamese population who are increasingly curious about their heritage. On U.S. campuses, there is a resurgence of interest in Vietnam studies. Free from being examined solely in a regional or Cold War context, Vietnam is increasingly studied as a country in its own right. Vietnamese scholars are beginning to collaborate with overseas researchers to piece together the country's fractured historical and literary record.

This report, based on many visits to Vietnamese libraries and archives between 1987 and 1997, examines the largely unexplored corpus of Vietnamese textual resources in research institutions and libraries there and elsewhere, the associated problems of bibliographic control, and issues of preservation. In response to some of the problems described here, The Henry Luce Foundation and the Harvard-Yenching Institute funded a preservation microfilming initiative proposed by the Southeast Asia Microforms Project (SEAM) of the Center for Research Libraries in January 1994. Activities of the SEAM project, the physical state of Vietnamese collections, and international cooperation on preservation and access are addressed in the second half of this report. The first half provides an overview of collections at greatest risk and summarizes efforts to improve bibliographic control.

HISTORY OF COLLECTIONS

Today, the most important archival and printed texts under public control are held in several major repositories in Vietnam: the National Archives facilities in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, the National Library in Hanoi, the General Sciences Library in Ho Chi Minh City, and the three research institutes that are under the control of the National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities (the Sino Nom Research Institute, the Historical Institute, and the Social Sciences Information Institute, all in Hanoi). Although additional materials reside in other archives and libraries, such as the Archives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the Army Library, the former library of the Pasteur Institute, and several provincial repositories, this report focuses on those institutions that house the primary social sciences and humanities collections, and those

archival collections that are most readily accessible to overseas scholars.

Vietnam's earliest libraries were collections of sacred Buddhist texts. By the fourteenth century, an increasingly bureaucratic Neo-Confucian imperial court began to eclipse the authority of the Buddhist Church and to commission official narratives of the state based on a Chinese model. No original texts of these official court histories survive, but subsequent dynasties produced edited versions. Some wood-block printed editions of these, dating from the 1650s, are held in the National Archives in Hanoi, but many have been destroyed. Other than epigraphic sources, most of the surviving documentary evidence dates only from 1802, when the last ruling dynasty, the Nguyen (1802-1945), unified the country's territory after three centuries of dynastic feuding. The dynasty established a stable administration in Hue where rich libraries contained special bound volumes of the official histories. An office was designated to oversee the writing and preservation of historical sources, including manuscript and printed sources in *nôm*[1] and Chinese. Chinese (*hán*) was the official language of the court until the early years of the twentieth century. Toward the end of the dynasty, however, court manuscripts and printed sources appear in *nôm* and the romanized *quoc ngu*[2] script.

Decentralized Control in the Colonial Period

The French colonial administration that began to govern the territories of Vietnam from the 1860s brought Catholic schools and libraries and Western ideas of learning and recordkeeping. The territories were administered as three separate units: the colony of Cochinchina and, later, the protectorates of Annam and Tonkin. The division of the territories and their varying legal status led to the imposition of different legal codes and eventually to the establishment of two parallel library facilities. The colonial authorities enacted a series of decrees that introduced the official use of *quoc ngu* and mandated the archival retention of documents with permanent value. In 1917, the Direction des Archives et Bibliothèques was established to administer efforts to develop libraries and archives. Under its authority, an Office of Archives and a Central Library were established in Hanoi.

Under French influence, *quoc ngu* also became a medium of popular vernacular expression in the early twentieth century. Introduction of the script led to a significant increase in publishing, and, by 1922, more effective legislation was enacted to ensure that these vernacular publications were deposited in both Paris and the Central Library in Hanoi.

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[1] *Nôm* is the Sinitic or demotic script that was the first written form of Vietnamese. It was the script of vernacular literature from possibly as early as the eighth century, and was commonly used into the early twentieth century.

[2] *Quoc ngu* ("national script") is the romanized form of the written language, attributed to Alexandre de Rhodes, who published the first Vietnamese-Latin-Portuguese dictionary in 1651.

Imperial Records: From 1802, the imperial capital of Hue was the center of official documentation of the court. In 1942, the first director of the Direction des Archives et Bibliothèques, Paul Boudet, conducted an inventory of the collections and moved some of the Nguyen archives from the imperial palace to an archival repository. The collections that were not moved appear to have been destroyed during the Viet Minh war of 1946-54. It is estimated that three-quarters of the court records were destroyed between 1945 and 1947. Fortunately, the French authorities had used some of the extant wood blocks to print additional copies of works from the imperial libraries. Some of these later printings, and the original printing blocks, are still preserved in the National Archives, the Sino Nom Institute, and the École Française d'Extrême Orient Library in Paris.

The National Archives and other repositories still hold many manuscript records concerning land rights and usage, including village regulations and land-tax records showing boundaries drawn up by the imperial government. Imperial authorities made three copies of these records, one of which was managed by the village headman. It is therefore not surprising that copies of important records from the early nineteenth century can still be found in village records and in provincial libraries. French libraries collected some of these materials, and a few were filmed.

École Française d'Extrême Orient: The École Française d'Extrême Orient (The French Far Eastern School [EFEO]) was established in Hanoi in 1898, nineteen years before the official library and archival authority was created. The EFEO became the focus of much of the earliest French scholarship on Asia. Its library became a repository for documentation resulting from archeological explorations, research projects, and acquisitions initiatives, including many epigraphic, printed, and manuscript materials from East and Southeast Asia. EFEO's research and documentation techniques left a legacy of expertise that the Vietnamese successor institutes have emulated as they continue to collect and document epigraphic and textual material.

After EFEO closed in 1958, its collection fell under the authority of the central library of the State Committee for Social Sciences (SCSS), now the Social Sciences Information Institute of the National Center for the Social Sciences and Humanities (NCSSH). Part of the EFEO collection remained in the custody of the NCSSH library, while the rest was moved to the Historical Institute in Hanoi which had opened in 1956. The Historical Institute library now claims a collection of 70,000 books, including 4,000 in *hán* and *nôm*. Many of the Historical Institute's important *hán* and *nôm* holdings were moved to the Sino Nom Research Institute after its establishment in 1979. It is unclear what criteria were used for selecting materials for transfer. However, the Sino Nom Research Institute now holds most of the valuable works. Fewer remain in the custody of the Historical Institute and the Social Sciences Information Institute.

Dislocation

The natural dispersion of the materials resulting from decentralized collection has been exacerbated by political turmoil, which has dislocated many collections. French dominion was overturned in 1954 following the Viet Minh war of resistance. The Geneva Accords left the country temporarily divided into the communist Democratic Republic in the north and the U.S.-backed regime of the Republic in the south. The de facto regimes were mindful of the contesting interpretations of history that upheld their alternative claims to legitimacy and guarded historical resources as material proof of their ideological claims. This led to the movement of much of the national library collections. In 1954, the collections from the Central Library in Hanoi were moved to Saigon with the retreating French forces after the Geneva Accords divided the country. In 1975, the collections—which by that time had been integrated into the newly constructed National Library of the Republic of Vietnam—were removed to Hanoi. Some of the collections were later returned to Ho Chi Minh City, but, in general, collections remain arbitrarily divided, with many instances of newspaper runs dispersed between the two locations.

Contestation and Destruction of Records

A French article written in the *Bulletin of EFEO* in 1904[3] describes the paucity of Vietnamese sources even then. The lack of sources results in part from the devastating losses caused by the Chinese invasion of 1407-27, during which time the Chinese Emperor ordered that all original Vietnamese books be sent to Nanjing. There, presumably, they were deliberately destroyed or have since been lost. A subsequent Vietnamese imperial order of 1718 resulted in the destruction of books using *nôm* (referred to as "vulgar script"). Later that century, the revolutionary Tay Son movement nominally adopted Vietnamese as its court language and used the *nôm* script to write its official records. But the regime held power for only two years, and the victorious Nguyen dynasty immediately destroyed all documentary evidence from this period. The few records that have been found from the Tay Son period have been transferred to the National Archives I in Hanoi.

Tensions between the ruling Neo-Confucian dynasty and the Buddhist church dating from the fourteenth century also have led to the destruction of documentary records. During times of Confucian ascendancy, popular forms of Taoism and Buddhism—often associated with millenarian cults and rebellion—were subject to repression. This resulted in the loss of documentation from Buddhist temples and communal village houses (*dinh*). The Buddhist *sangha* (religious community), historically influential in social and political

[3] Cadière, L. and Pelliot, Paul. "Première étude sur les sources Annamites de l'histoire d'Annam. *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient* 4, no. 3 (1904): 617-671.

movements, was active in the anti-French resistance movement throughout the first half of the twentieth century. In the 1960s, it opposed the Catholic regime of the South. While published texts from both these periods can be found in libraries and archival repositories, there is little evidence in Vietnam of the organizational archives of the *sangha*, or of syncretic religious groups that were active in the late colonial and American periods, such as the Cao Dai and the Hoa Hao.[4] Similarly, there are few archival records of the Catholic Church, which has been subject to corresponding periods of repression.[5]

During the Buddhist unrest in South Vietnam in 1963 and 1968, many *sangha* were accused of distributing communist propaganda. Monks were arrested and documents were seized from the pagodas. Important regional pagodas that had been damaged or plundered during the military events of 1945–47 also were targets in the Tet Offensive of 1968, when many libraries in the Hue area were burned in bombing raids. Much of the documentation that survived the Buddhist struggle movements of the 1960s and the military destruction of 1968 was moved north in 1975 under a decree by the Ministry of Culture. However, many of these materials were later sent back south and now reside in Ho Chi Minh City, either in pagodas or at what is now called the Van Hanh Buddhist Research Institute.

Records of War: Vietnam's history of civil strife has meant that "official" publications are often produced by a revolutionary or rebellious faction outside the jurisdiction of the administration in power. The National Library has a significant collection of sources in *quoc ngu* printed in the Viet Minh resistance zones from 1946 to 1954. A bibliography of the materials has been finished but has not yet been published. The Ministry of Culture has not yet granted permission for the collection to be filmed under the Southeast Asia Microforms Project. The Viet Minh base of operations, in hillside caves north of Hanoi, was not ideal for preservation, so it is fortunate that these resources still exist in the library.

Conditions during the American involvement in the Vietnam War were no more conducive to archival preservation. However, North Vietnamese and National Liberation Front soldiers claim to have kept unit records and moved them from one tunnel complex or cave to another. As we know from the large collection of captured documents on film at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., U.S. forces and their allies seized many unit-level and strategic planning documents in their search-and-destroy missions of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The documents show that record keeping and reporting continued even in the most extreme conditions and would

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[4] Colonial-era records of some of these social and political groups are available in the French archives. Foreign researchers are currently denied access to the records of the Republic, which now reside in the National Archives II in Ho Chi Minh City.

[5] Further research also needs to be carried out on the status of archives of the Catholic Church in Vietnam.

be the envy of many a peacetime bureaucracy. Soldiers and civilians alike had to carry "personal history statements," which were histories of their families' revolutionary credentials. They also kept diaries in which they wrote reminiscences and poems. This collection of an estimated 600,000 uninventoried filmed documents at the U.S. National Archives is a gift to the social and military historian of the American war. It can be assumed that an even richer treasure of materials will be found in the archival holdings for this period in Hanoi.

The Chau Ban: There is no better way of illustrating the dislocation of materials than to describe the history of what is arguably the most important extant archival source: the *chau ban*, or vermilion records. This is a collection of court documents that were passed to the emperor for comment. The name is derived from the vermilion ink that the emperor used for this purpose. The records cover all reign periods of the Nguyen dynasty from 1802 to 1945. They include correspondence, memorials from various offices of court, reports from remote provinces, and even materials relating to medicinal practices of court doctors.

In the early 1960s, the National Archives of the South Vietnamese government moved its *chau ban* collection from Hue to Saigon, and then to the hill resort of Da Lat for safekeeping. Shortly after the move, the Vietnamese American Association (VAA) filmed 64 reels, representing some of the first two reign periods. The VAA presented the camera master of these films to President Kennedy shortly before his death, and they reside today in the Kennedy Library.

In 1960, Hue University published a two-volume index in *quoc ngu* of the *chau ban* collection, covering several reign periods. In addition, the university library holds unpublished, handwritten transcriptions for further volumes. From the end of the war through the early 1980s, the librarians at Hue University believed that the original *chau ban* had been lost. In fact, the volumes were moved from Da Lat to Saigon after the war. They remained there in what had been the National Archives of the Republic of Vietnam, now the National Archives II. In 1991 they were moved to Hanoi, ostensibly for preservation work, but more probably to ensure control over a resource that had begun to attract foreign interest. (The volumes are currently off-limits to foreign researchers.) The collection consists of 603 parts (*quyen* or, literally, scrolls, since this was their original format) bound into volumes and 100 more unbound. Each volume is folio size, and many are in very poor condition; the leather binding is badly damaged by moisture and insects. Many pages are inseparable because of moisture damage.

The story of the *chau ban* is typical of the disjuncture in the bibliographic memory caused by war and political division. It also demonstrates the problem created by use of multiple linguistic systems. Catalog records for the collection use its Chinese title, while the collection is known commonly by its *quoc ngu* title, *chau ban*. Until recently, few contemporary scholars of Vietnamese history

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were aware that some of the collection exists on film. Yet four major Southeast Asia research collections in the United States have housed positive copies since they were made in the 1960s.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL

The weak bibliographic control that hindered access to most of these described sources also contributes to the difficulty of preservation planning. On-line bibliographic control of published *quoc ngu* sources in Vietnam, France, and other countries with strong holdings remains fragmentary. There are enduring problems caused by the lack of an accepted standard coding for the romanized script's double diacritics. Only in recent years has publication of several catalogs shed light on some of the important extant holdings in *hán* and *nôm* held in the major repositories of Hanoi. Earlier bibliographic projects carried out by the French in Vietnam are now of questionable value as guides to preservation priorities, since it is no longer clear where materials are held. Even bibliographies such as those produced by the old EFEO library are not widely available within Vietnam or abroad; titles filmed under EFEO's auspices are not available for purchase, nor do they appear in standard bibliographic utilities or any registers of microform masters.

Bibliographic control over early *quoc ngu* printed materials dates from the copyright legislation of 1922. Materials deposited in Paris under this legislation form the Fonds Indochinois, which the Bibliothèque nationale de France microfiched with help from the Commission on Preservation and Access (a program of the Council on Library and Information Resources). Machine-readable records, also produced with support from the Commission, are now included in the European Register of Microform Masters and are available on the RLIN database. Publication by the Bibliothèque nationale de France of microfiche catalogs of the *dépôt légal* monographs and serials from 1922 to 1954 enables us to find which materials are held uniquely in Vietnamese repositories.[6] In 1995, the SEAM project came to an agreement with the National Library in Hanoi to film early *quoc ngu* sources that do not appear in these catalogs.

Despite the valuable contribution of this bibliographic initiative, which has created access to most French holdings, the catalogs have not included important newspaper and serial holdings and other "ephemera" held in the various archival collections in France. This means that we still do not have a complete picture of some of the most important published sources—even those in the major repositories in France. Bibliographic access to the same colonial-period materials in Vietnam is limited to the original card catalogs produced

[6] *Catalogue du fonds indochinois: livres vietnamiens imprimés en quoc ngu, 1922-1954*. Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1991; and Pottelon, Jean-Claude, *Catalogue des périodiques vietnamiens de la Bibliothèque nationale*. Ed. sur microfiches. Paris : Bibliothèque nationale, 1993.

by the French librarians at the Central Library in Hanoi and the EFEO library. However, there are no available guides to any published official sources that might now reside in the custody of the National Archives system in Vietnam. All of the colonial-era catalogs are only theoretical guides to Vietnamese holdings, for the work of comparing catalog records with extant volumes in library collections is just beginning.

A list of *dépôt légal* materials, which used to be issued each month and is still available in both libraries in Hanoi, is a useful guide to published materials with which to compare extant holdings. A project has been underway at the Social Sciences Information Institute (the former EFEO library) to compare the *dépôt légal* lists with holdings. An inventory of titles will be put into a MARC-compatible format, which will be used as the basis of an on-line catalog and a published bibliography. Unfortunately, there are no plans to include the holdings of the National Library in this initiative.

At the same time, work is underway at the National Library to create an on-line public catalog by converting the existing card catalog to electronic records. Building on the 12,000 records created as part of the Vietnam Union Catalog, described below, the National Library has now created close to 45,000 records for its holdings from the post-1975 period. This retrospective conversion project will work backward into the war period and then to the colonial era.

With imminent access to full Internet services, the National Library and the General Sciences Library are prepared to launch Web access to their on-line public access catalogs (OPACs). They have initiated two LAN systems that serve the provincial libraries, north and south. Internet access to regional catalogs could greatly enhance our knowledge of holdings in remote libraries, but access depends upon the work of skilled catalogers in these libraries. While some U.S.-trained librarians have started to teach cataloging skills in more remote locations, lack of training remains an impediment to creating the kinds of union lists that facilitate preservation planning.

Materials published in *hán* or *nôm* pose other problems of bibliographic control. Vietnam is both physically and intellectually removed from the bibliographic world that is now being represented in the electronic environment through the use of Chinese-Japanese-Korean (CJK) library software. While there seems to be an opportunity to integrate *hán* holdings with existing bibliographic utilities carrying Chinese-language materials, there is no effort to do so. As is shown by the case of the *chau ban*, the linguistic problems created by *quoc ngu* representation of works written in *hán* means that many valuable titles are lost to the Chinese-speaking research community. Vietnamese libraries contain a wealth of materials from the early nineteenth century that are written in Chinese and relate to China. Furthermore, the EFEO office in Hanoi was the central research facility for all of East Asia. Its holdings of valuable works published in China during the late colonial period are extensive and probably include many titles that Chinese libraries lost during periods of political turmoil this century.

Scholars associated with the reestablished EFEO office in Hanoi are making valuable contributions to our knowledge of *hán* and *nôm* holdings through their recent publications, including valuable bibliographies.[7] However, these tools are not comprehensive and do not contribute to any of the major international on-line bibliographic resources. In recent years, the EFEO staff, who are respected scholars with privileged access and influence in archives and libraries, have become increasingly interested in promoting their scholarship internationally. This office could play an important role in facilitating the cooperation between librarians and scholars that could lead to even more useful bibliographic products.

The Vietnam Union Catalog Project: The Vietnam Union Catalog (VUC) was conceived in response to the dislocation of published material described in this report. Its object is to create an international union list of Vietnamese *quoc ngu* titles held in the major libraries of Vietnam, France, Australia, and the United States. With financial support from the Australian government and The Henry Luce Foundation, the project trained two librarians from the National Library in Hanoi to enter records for the Vietnamese National Bibliography in MARC format, using computers donated by Australia. The VUC currently produces a microfiche list generated from the Australian Bibliographic Network (ABN), which is the host database for the current Vietnamese national bibliographic output. Efforts to integrate Australian and Vietnamese holdings with RLIN or OCLC have been slow, but there are plans to load the converted VUC records into OCLC as part of the ABN record set.[8]

The SEAM microfilming project offers a chance to demonstrate the link between bibliographic control and preservation management by using the VUC database to distribute records of master negative film holdings. Catalogers trained by the VUC project will generate records as film targets, which include holdings information. These will then be upgraded to full MARC status and will eventually be loaded into the OCLC database with the ABN records. It is not yet clear whether records generated for the titles filmed are being included in the VUC record set, or whether they will appear only in the National Library OPAC. With the equipment and expertise this filming project has established at the National Library, it will be possible to duplicate films already produced and to film on demand any titles that scholars request from the VUC holdings.

There is interest in expanding the project to include *nôm* records. In recent years, there has been much progress in creating international coding standards for both *quoc ngu* and *nôm*. Unicode standards are now in place for both. The Sino Nom Research Institute helped

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[7] A three-volume inventory of the *hán and nôm* documents in the Sino Nom Institute and other repositories in Hanoi was published in 1993, *Di san Han Nom Viet Nam: thu muc de yeu*. Hanoi: Khoa hoc xa hoi, 1993.

[8] The Australian National Library has agreed to load these records, with the permission of the National Library of Vietnam.

develop the Unicode standards for *nôm*, and librarians there are keen to develop software to facilitate the inclusion of *nôm* records into the VUC catalog, although this seems far from the current technical capabilities of the bibliographic utilities involved.

PRESERVATION

The Physical Condition of Repositories in Vietnam

Physical conditions are poor in libraries and archives, and problems of deteriorating collections are often exacerbated by the well-meaning but uninformed activities of untrained staff. The humid climate encourages insect infestation and mold. Library shelves are typically constructed of soft woods that encourage insects. Books are so tightly crowded onto the shelves that they are distorted and more vulnerable to humidity damage because there is no air circulation. Many valuable materials are piled on the floor because shelving is inadequate or has collapsed.

Inadequate shelving was a particular problem during the decades of close association with the Soviet Union, which provided thousands of Russian-language titles annually to Vietnamese libraries. These titles would often occupy prime storage space while fragile indigenous titles were kept on the floor. Until quite recently, many facilities had missing windowpanes, and materials were exposed to dust, rain, and insect damage. Even today, staff members do not appreciate the importance of simple cleanliness: shelves and books are not dusted, and cigarette smoke and food preparation and consumption are pervasive in almost all libraries.

Conditions in the National Archives facilities are generally better than in libraries. The colonial facility that still houses the National Archives I in Hanoi was designed with good air flow from windows on either side of the main stack ranges. Air ducts pass between the floors and through the open lattice structure of the shelves, which are constructed of extremely hard and insect-repellent ironwood. Although these air ducts enhance air flow, they also pose serious fire hazards.

The government is slowly addressing the need to upgrade facilities. The new National Archives III facility in Hanoi will reportedly serve as a preservation center and repository to take the overflow from the old colonial building. While this facility has new office space and reading rooms, the new stack areas have not yet been built. The National Library has a capital budget that has paid for minor renovations, including an air-conditioned microfilm storage area and computer room, and significant upgrading of some office space. In late summer of 1997, new ground was broken for a four-story stack extension, long planned for the grand old colonial building in central Hanoi. Even before it was finished, the new National Archives II building in Ho Chi Minh City had banks of computer terminals in place amid the construction rubble. An

impressive multistory stack extension now rises from the grounds next to the old American Embassy, but the reading room, which houses important guides and finding aids and is the temporary repository for valuable materials being consulted by researchers, remains a five-minute walk away, in a building that is ill-lit, damp, and dirty.

The Social Science Information Institute has recently undergone a major renovation. All of the old wooden shelves are being removed for cleaning and treatment with insect-resistant stains; books are being dusted and inventoried. Soviet publications, once regarded with such respect, have now been relegated to off-site storage, while vernacular and French materials are restored to the shelves. The Institute has installed an expensive—and obtrusive—Korean sprinkler system in the book stack areas, but it is not clear whether staff members know what chemical suppressant the system uses, whether it is harmful to humans, or how to treat books that might be damaged by it.

Conservation Imperatives

Although money is increasingly available for high-profile, high-cost technical developments, there is little attention given to simple, cost-effective technologies that would help preserve materials. During the SEAM training workshops in 1995, the director of preservation and conservation at Cornell University Libraries, John Dean, discussed preservation priorities and capacities with preservation staff at major library facilities. With limited knowledge and equipment, library staffs are making very slow progress in dealing with an exponentially increasing preservation problem. There are few facilities or skills available for dealing with the most urgent preservation problems of insect and mold damage. Pesticides and fungicides that Soviet advisors introduced to the National Archives in the 1970s reportedly caused a high incidence of cancer and other sickness among the staff members. The only affordable palliatives currently available to staff are cleanliness, increased air flow, protection from sunlight, and the simple enclosure techniques demonstrated by John Dean.

The National Archives staff have done a creditable job producing cartons constructed of durable cardboard, using techniques introduced by French archivists in the 1920s and 1930s. Older cartons have withstood climate and insect damage. Except for cartons that sit close to windows, most have sustained little damage, and most of the French-era records are in good condition. Recently produced enclosures and bindings are of lower quality because archivists could not obtain acid- or lignin-free paper products, or good quality insect- and mold-resistant cloths. Glues used in book binding are typically organic, and they attract insects. Binding is used as a preferred conservation method, even for large-format and fragile works damaged by the binding process and stressed by storage in a vertical position.

There appears to be no pressure on the publishing trade to use permanent paper in book production. Paper has until recently been scarce. When the ideological imperative for the production of political tracts was high, paper quality and long-term preservation expectations were not considered priorities. Some materials published as recently as the 1980s are already extremely embrittled. Because of the poor paper quality, local librarians frequently have to photocopy valuable materials rather than allow patrons to handle the fragile originals. However, libraries rarely own high-quality copying equipment, so photocopies are often unclear and are subject to rapid fading of the image. Moreover, bleed-through from the heavy print markings used in Vietnamese language diacritics often makes photocopying and filming difficult for many works published on newsprint.

Even under optimal conditions in U.S. libraries, Vietnamese publications from the 1970s to the mid-1980s are becoming yellow with acidity and are too fragile to bind. Scanning may be an attractive alternative to many Vietnamese librarians since CD-ROMs and computer equipment seem to fare better than film in the heat and humidity. This observation arises, in part, from the fact that computers are afforded clean and air-conditioned space, whereas paper collections and film are not. Considering the problems posed by bleed-through and the punishing climatic effects on film, one is tempted to think that digital capture and the use of threshold techniques to eliminate background "noise" could provide a more effective preservation system.

There is an urgent need to study the physical and research characteristics of extant materials to establish preservation priorities and cost-effective treatments. The Sino Nom Research Institute in Hanoi is already considering experimenting with digital technologies. The National Archives I has begun a high-profile project to scan the *chau ban*. One hundred of six hundred volumes have been scanned, with each volume residing on one CD. The project provides key-word access to a parallel *quoc ngu* text, and color images to distinguish the red ink of the emperor's comments. The National Archives director intends to use a color printer to create a paper reproduction as a preservation copy. Meanwhile, the National Archives still resists the idea of filming the volumes that were not filmed in the 1960s.

While it is encouraging that the Government is taking preservation issues seriously—the deputy prime minister with responsibility for culture recently visited the SEAM microfilming facilities in the National Library and has been responsible for promoting and funding the *chau ban* scanning project—it is also of concern that there is little understanding of the long-term management implications of using digital capture as a preservation medium. With current levels of technical and management expertise so low among library managers, and a political climate in which information policies can change with the wind, libraries are vulnerable to short-term solutions offered by the expedient, but inappropriate, technologies that are

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

sometimes promoted by commercial vendors whose products come coupled with international aid projects.

Preservation Microfilming Activities

During the 1940s and 1950s, the EFEO library filmed several thousand titles, copies of which now reside in the EFEO library in Paris. After the EFEO closed in Hanoi in 1958, the Social Science Information Institute used the French equipment to continue microfilming until 1972, when the institute ran out of film stock or the cameras failed. The handwritten register of microfilm holdings at the institute shows that titles filmed during the French period were archived in Paris, with a duplicate negative held in Hanoi. Occasionally, a positive was transferred to the EFEO branch in Saigon. The register also shows that the materials filmed by Vietnamese staff in the early years following the French departure are consistent with those filmed in the earlier French project—they are predominantly valuable *hán* titles. In the later years, the selection criteria changed, favoring the standard published works of Ho Chi Minh and other political leaders—presumably in response to a new information policy. Nevertheless, between 1958 and 1970 the institute filmed some 2,000 valuable *hán* titles.

In 1992, the Library of Congress analyzed a reel of microfilm from the collection of the Social Sciences Information Institute. The analysis showed that at least some films are of good enough resolution and density to create duplicate negatives. Because of the film's age, the LC photoduplication laboratory could not test for residual impurities, so the long-term archival condition of these materials cannot be estimated. However, it can be assumed that most of the films are on an acetate base and therefore do not comply with optimal preservation standards. A full inventory of salvageable film needs to be created, and remastered negatives should be made for those titles not held in Paris.

The Sino Nom Research Institute now reports holdings of 14,000 *hán* and *nôm* books and 12,529 rubbings from stone and other inscriptions, dating from the Ly (1010) to Nguyen dynasties. Even assuming, optimistically, that half of the *hán* and *nôm* materials that the Institute filmed and archived after the French departure meet the standards for archival preservation, and that the EFEO library in Paris has viable master negatives for those titles filmed under its auspices, it is likely that there are still more than 10,000 book titles remaining to be preserved. There are also other materials, including copies of village regulations that are now in very poor condition.

A government resolution of 1976 mandates the National Library to build and preserve collections. However, the library's preservation department is not equipped to achieve these objectives. Its main preservation priority is rebinding popular novels. The library has an East German 35 mm Zeiss camera from the 1960s, which it had used intermittently until 1994 when it was dismantled to make room for a new Zeutschel camera supplied by the Harvard-Yenching Institute

for the Southeast Asia Microforms Project. During a micrographics training workshop in Hanoi in February 1995, trainers discovered that the library had no film stock and only very old powder-processing chemistry, which staff had used to process film manually. Unable to import chemicals for the new Bray processing machine in time for the workshop, trainers achieved readable short-term results using the old powdered chemicals.

The SEAM Project: The primary objective of the SEAM project was to establish modern microfilming facilities in Hanoi. This would enable filming of the most important materials, primarily those in the National Library, the National Archives I, the Sino Nom Research Institute, and the Social Sciences Information Institute.

Since being funded in January 1994, the project has progressed slowly toward some of its goals. As one component of the project, John Dean led a series of preservation workshops in Hanoi and other libraries around the country in February 1995. At the same time, Robert Mottice, of Mottice Micrographics, Inc., taught a micrographics training workshop in Hanoi, established a fully equipped micrographics laboratory with processing and quality control capabilities at the National Library in Hanoi, and repaired the existing filming equipment at the General Sciences Library in Ho Chi Minh City. Although the project intends to involve several important institutions, SEAM is working only with the National Library and the Vestiges Management Service in Hoi An in the initial phase.[9] With a successful filming program now established at the National Library, it is hoped that other institutions will see the benefits of film as a preservation medium and will cooperate with the project.

The first films produced under the project have arrived in the United States, and filming of several newspapers from the 1920s and 1930s continues in Hanoi. The project has faced several problems, which seem generally typical of all assistance efforts in Vietnam. The biggest has been a tendency toward secrecy among institutions. It has been hard to learn what resources exist at each institution so that preservation priorities can be planned. It is common for institutions to deny having agreements with other agencies to carry out similar or identical assistance programs. Without permanent project representation in-country, it is difficult to learn about, or coordinate with, other library assistance projects. Project staff tried to check on parallel efforts with the various foreign communities and embassies in Hanoi. However, cultural officers at embassies are not always aware of assistance projects that their nationals are carrying out.

Related to this problem of secrecy is the lack of cooperation among institutions. The SEAM project intended to use a single filming facility to preserve all the documents in the most urgent need of reformatting. This has proved to be an impracticable plan, since materials cannot be moved from one jurisdiction to another: the

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[9] The project in Hoi An met with additional problems after the 1997 restructuring of province boundaries, and it is now suspended.

National Library cannot cooperate with the SSII because they are not governed by the same ministry, and the National Archives cannot let any of its materials leave its control. The facility in Hoi An does not want to relinquish its camera film for processing at the National Library in Hanoi, where the only film processing machine is located. The University of Hue is reluctant to cooperate with the institution in Hoi An to preserve local documentation.

Another concern is securing written agreements with institutions. For this project, the primary issue of discussion with participating institutions was the export of a microfilm master negative. Project staff discussed several alternatives with library directors. The ideal situation, in the project staff's view, would be to keep the camera negative in underground storage in the United States. This was not acceptable to the Vietnamese, however. Instead, an agreement was sought in which the Vietnamese would provide the Center for Research Libraries (CRL) with a second-generation print master as a security backup copy, with all duplicating rights remaining with the originating library. The director of the National Library crafted a proposal to the Ministry of Culture and Information in which he carefully stated the case for preservation. He set his request against the background of growing interest in the preservation of cultural heritage by UNESCO's Memory of the World Project and the architectural preservation work in which the Ministry is engaged elsewhere. Although the agreement remains unsigned, the National Library has slowly worked through the bureaucratic difficulties and is finally sending duplicate negative film to CRL.

International Cooperation

Vietnam has become increasingly active in regional and international professional activities, including the International Commission on Archives and its Southeast Asian Branch, SARBICA, and the Congress of Southeast Asian Libraries (CONSAL). Over the last ten years, several librarians have received training in Europe, Australia, and, more recently, the United States.

A program funded by the Harvard-Yenching Institute from 1994 to 1996 enabled more than 20 Vietnamese librarians to complete MLIS degrees at Simmons College in Boston. Most of these librarians received at least rudimentary instruction in preservation and preservation management issues. The basic training provided under this program has been extended by the conservation internship program recently established by John Dean at Cornell University Library and funded by The Henry Luce Foundation. The program is open to preservation technicians and managers from Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. One Vietnamese librarian from the Sino Nom Research Institute was among the first class, and it is expected that at least two more Vietnamese librarians will receive training during the life of this program.

The Simmons training program has been very effective. Three of its graduates are now directors of major academic libraries, one is a

deputy director of a major research library, and one is in line to become the next director of the National Library. Several other graduates returned from the program with much needed cataloging expertise. Together, these alumni form the beginning of a corps of trained professionals. However, it is a continuing disappointment that the profession is not able to raise its status within Vietnam. The British Council office in Hanoi and the Simmons College program have energetically advocated enhancing the library profession through the establishment of a professional library association. Without this kind of recognition, it is harder for library directors to receive equal opportunities in training and funding.

In the past ten years, the Australian government and Australian technical assistance agencies have provided considerable material assistance and training for libraries and archives. Beyond sponsoring the first library training for the Vietnam Union Catalog, the Australian government has been active through the Asia and Pacific Special Interest Group of the Australian Library Association, and through the IFLA Preservation and Conservation structure. The latter agency, which is administered for the Pacific region by the National Library of Australia, has been particularly active in sponsoring preservation training workshops. Regionally, Vietnamese libraries have benefited from training opportunities provided by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education, Project in Archaeology and Fine Arts (SPAFA) Library in Bangkok; Chiang Mai University; the Asian Institute of Technology in Thailand; and, most recently, the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore.

France, Japan, and the United States are striving to reestablish scholarly ties with Vietnam and have started to fund cultural preservation work. It is understandable that the Vietnamese government views the overtures of the three former protagonists with some suspicion. Nevertheless, several projects are under way. Under an agreement with the Centre des Archives d'Outre Mer in Aix-en-Provence, the French government hopes to help support the preservation of colonial-era materials. Also, several Vietnamese archivists from both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City have received research scholarships to work with the collections of the Centre des Archives d'Outre Mer. The École Française d'Extrême Orient returned to Hanoi in 1992 and has helped in important research and publishing projects, as noted above.

In 1992, the Japanese government offered funds to build a new archives facility in Ho Chi Minh City, in exchange for permission to film the *chau ban* and other sources. Negotiations with the Japanese donor reportedly foundered when the Vietnamese government decided to move the *chau ban* to Hanoi for preservation work. The Vietnamese government has now provided its own funding to build the new archives facility in Ho Chi Minh City and is accepting Japanese funds to help with the construction of the new storage facilities for the National Archives III in Hanoi.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Vietnam is fast reestablishing diplomatic and economic ties throughout the world, particularly with its neighbors, as a new member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. These ties afford new opportunities for integration into international networks of information professionals. They also bring the responsibility to accept international standards, as with the Berne Copyright Convention. It is hoped that, with the increasing access granted to scholars, and the growing numbers of Vietnamese students being trained overseas, the ideals of reciprocity and exchange of intellectual property will come to inform common practice. Building on the Vietnamese Union Catalog to provide more open access to all bibliographic records and archival inventories is one such example.

Funding agencies that sponsor overseas visits for officials or programs to restructure administrative and educational systems should recognize the primacy of libraries in any process of rebuilding educational capacity. Such programs should include library directors and staff as a matter of routine. By emphasizing the primacy of this role, international organizations and private funding agencies can enhance the status of professionals within the administrative structure of Vietnam. Agencies planning to support education in Vietnam should consider the following recommendations.

Training

The level of expertise is very low among faculty members at the existing library training programs in Vietnam. Few teachers have attained even a master's degree. Those who do have higher degrees, mostly from the former Eastern European countries, admit that they are not well equipped to address the subject approaches to information access that patrons now demand. Another fundamental problem is that library workers, both trained and untrained, hold low status in Vietnam and are unable to affect national policy.

Library training remains outside the scope of most funding agencies that support higher education programs for Vietnamese scholars. Funding agencies should realize the importance of library collections as not only the foundation of international scholarship on Vietnam, but also as the foundation of civic knowledge. The Harvard-Yenching Institute should consider renewing support for the program to train librarians at Simmons College. Graduates of that program now form a strong leadership group in the major libraries of the country, but this group still lacks the critical mass to influence national information policy. Such training is expensive, in part because candidates from libraries typically lack adequate levels of English language skill to cope immediately in an academic setting. Usually, additional language training must be provided.

National Preservation Planning

Bibliographic control remains fragmented; we still have little knowledge of where valuable holdings reside or of their condition. Some recent Simmons graduates are now advocating serious surveys of collections to establish preservation needs. For the first time, the government has made modest funds available to the General Sciences Library for preservation. However, this initiative is underfunded and does not enjoy the prestige it deserves. A permanent panel of scholars, librarians, and archivists needs to be established to form a National Commission for Preservation. This Commission should be responsible for surveying major repositories and establishing preservation priorities. As part of the current government's emphasis on modernizing while preserving traditional culture, preservation of the country's written heritage should be promoted.

Reformatting

For several reasons, digitizing selected archival and library collections might make sense for Vietnamese materials in poor condition. Digital capture and the use of threshold techniques could eliminate the "background noise" caused by bleedthrough. Electronic records are also more likely than film to be stored with the proper climatic controls, since microfilm is regarded as old-fashioned and not compatible with the state's objectives to modernize. However, few administrators in libraries or in the government understand the issues involved with the long-term retention of electronic records, and libraries lack the permanent preservation bureaucracy to manage the updating of hardware and migration of data.

A study should be conducted of the physical characteristics and research value of extant materials to establish preservation priorities and cost-effective treatments. Such a study could be carried out with the help of organizations such as the Commission on Preservation and Access, IFLA, and the International Federation of Archives, whose Southeast Asian Branch, SARBICA, has been involved with archival issues in Vietnam since the mid-1980s.

Work carried out by John Dean and the SEAM project to educate library and archives administrators about the shortcomings of digital technologies as a preservation medium should be supported by additional training and site-visit opportunities for high-level decision-makers. In the summer of 1997, the SEAM project sent a set of recommendations focused on this issue to the Office of the Prime Minister and the Culture Ministry. Major donor countries working in the arena of cultural preservation should agree on suitable preservation methods to avoid giving conflicting signals to the Vietnamese government.

Full filming facilities should be made available at all of the important repositories mentioned in this report, and staff should be trained in preservation standards. A national policy for the disposition and bibliographic control of preservation master negatives

should be developed, and a national storage facility for these masters should be created.

A standard international preservation copyright agreement should be drawn up, with endorsement from influential organizations such as UNESCO, IFLA, the International Commission on Archives, and the Commission on Preservation and Access. Such an agreement would establish the role of reformatting as a preservation tool and greatly help negotiations with countries whose own copyright laws are unclear.

Conservation

The general preservation crisis in Vietnam is clearly beyond the scope of any reformatting program. The issue of preserving local records of the Party and People's Committee, the private collections of groups such as the churches, and the national-level government records constitutes a problem of enormous dimensions. Other nontextual materials, such as photographic prints and negatives and cine film, are also distributed among many repositories, most with few facilities for successful archival storage. The most effective conservation treatment is simple cleanliness and facility maintenance, which will reduce dust and insect and water damage. Simple and cheap enclosure techniques should be made more widely known.

It is commendable that the Vietnamese government is allocating funds to upgrade facilities, but emphasis should be placed on low-cost, high-impact improvements, such as metal shelving and effective air conditioners powered by a safe and constant electrical supply. (Office buildings and hotels regularly have generators with enough output to run air conditioners.) The findings of research on optimal storage conditions, particularly those related to the problems of storage in high temperature and humidity, should be shared with Vietnamese institutions planning to renovate old facilities. This could be accomplished through seminars or workshops.

Book Production Techniques

The use of permanent paper in government and academic publishing would greatly lengthen the life of printed materials and begin to slow the rapid growth of items that require preservation measures. The government should encourage the publishing trade to begin using permanent paper. As it plans to replace old paper mills, the government should consider alkaline paper processes, which are far less polluting than acid-paper production. More protective bindings, made from products that are less prone to insect and mold damage, would also reduce the conservation burden.

Legal Requirements

A 1982 Law on the Preservation of Archival Records mandates that state agencies preserve materials under their control until they are handed over to the custody of the central archiving authority. However, the law is considered inadequate and is being revised because it does not establish retention criteria and schedules for records of permanent archival value. Although the law allowed the expenditure of 30 million *dong* (less than $3,000 at the current rate of exchange) for preservation equipment and sanctioned the use of foreign expertise for training, the results were disappointing according to a ten-year review whose findings were published in the archives literature. With the proliferation of joint enterprise ventures, the records of which are not state property, the laws governing these materials are unclear, and increasing volumes of records of public interest are not falling within the legal framework of the archival authority. As with other areas of the law in Vietnam, provisions remain untested and confused. The library and archival communities should be empowered to clarify such laws as are needed to ensure the long-term preservation of, and bibliographic access to, the nation's documentary record.

VIETNAMESE INSTITUTIONS

Institution Name	Vietnamese Name	Location
General Sciences Library	Thư Viện Khoa Học Tổng Hợp	Hồ Chí Minh City
Historical Institute	Viện Sử Học	Hà Hội
National Archives I	Trung Tâm Lưu Trữ Quốc Gia I	Hà Nội
National Archives II	Trung Tâm Lưu Trữ Quốc Gia II	Hồ Chí Minh City
National Archives III	Trung Tâm Lưu Trữ Quốc Gia III	Hà Hội
National Library	Thư Viện Quốc Gia	Hà Nội
Sino Nom Research Institute	Viện Nghiện Cứu Hán Nôm	Hà Nội
Social Sciences Information Inst.	Viện Thông Tin Khoa Học Xã Hội	Hà Nội
Van Hanh Buddhist Research Inst.	Học Viện Phật Giáo Việt Nam	Hồ Chí Minh City
Vestiges Management Service	Ban Quản Lý Di tích Hội An	Hội An

GLOSSARY

Nôm	Sinitic script fist used to write Vietnamese
Quốc ngữ	Romanized script attributed to Jesuit missionaries in the seventeenth century.
Châu bản	Vermilion records: a collection of court documents that were passed up to the Emperor for comment.